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WASHINGTON--FORMER PRESIDENT [illegible] SAID THE RUSSIANS CAPTURED U2 PILOT FRANCIS GARY POWERS, ON MAY 1, 1960, THAT IT HAD BEEN A MISTAKE TO KEEP THE ALTITUDE ESPIONAGE AIRCRAFT FLIGHTS OPERATING SO NEAR TO THE TIME OF THE ILL-FATED PARIS SUMMIT MEETING.

HE CONCEDED HIS OWN ERRORS IN THE MATTER IN A DISCUSSION HE HAD WITH W. AVERELL HARRIMAN SMITH, UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL WHITE HOUSE REPORTER. SMITH INTERVIEWED EISENHOWER FOR HIS BOOK, "A PRESIDENT'S ODYSSEY." WHICH WAS PUBLISHED BY HARPER AND BROTHERS IN JANUARY, 1961.

THE UPI REPORTER WAS PERMITTED TO TALK WITH EISENHOWER FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS A FEW WEEKS AFTER THE U2 INCIDENT AND THE ABORTIVE MAY 16, 1960, BIG FOUR SUMMIT MEETING IN PARIS. IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO QUOTE THE FORMER PRESIDENT DIRECTLY, BUT EISENHOWER TALKED FREELY AS REPORTED IN THE BOOK.

HE SAID THE AMERICAN U2 PLANE OVER RUSSIA ON MAY 1 WAS THE SORT OF BREAK THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN WAITING FOR. HE ACCEPTED WITH NO DISCERNIBLE RANCOR THAT THE U2 CASE WAS MARKED BY SOME BUNGLING IN WASHINGTON. HE WAS SPEAKING PARTICULARLY OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE FIRST REPORTS ON THE PLANE BEING DOWNED WERE TREATED IN OFFICIAL STATEMENTS (THE COVERING ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE U-2 WAS AN UNARMED WEATHER OBSERVATION PLANE).

HE ADDED QUICKLY, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD NO APOLOGY WHATEVER FOR THE FOUR YEARS OF THE U-2 FLIGHTS OVER SOVIET TERRITORY, BUT THE VISITOR (SMITH) WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISED WHEN THE PRESIDENT SAID CALMLY THAT HE HIMSELF BECAME A BIT CARELESS WITH SUCCESS. THE FLIGHTS WERE GOING OVER RUSSIA WITHOUT INCIDENT, THEY WERE RETURNING VALUABLE INFORMATION ON A MIGHTY POWER AND A POTENTIAL ENEMY THAT KEPT ITS [illegible] LOCKED TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD. YES, IT WAS TRUE, EISENHOWER [illegible] SOME OVER-CONFIDENCE ABOUT THE CONTINUING SUCCESS OF THE U-2 FLIGHTS AND IT DID NOT OCCUR TO HIM TO STOP THEM JUST BEFORE THE BIG FOUR MEETING IN PARIS.

THE FORMER PRESIDENT ALSO BELIEVES FIRMLY THAT WHILE THE U-2 INCIDENT WAS AN UNFORTUNATE BREAK FOR THE UNITED STATES, SOVIET PREMIER NIKITA KHRUSHCHEV HAD INDICATED IN A NUMBER OF OTHER WAYS THAT HE DID NOT INTEND TO BE COOPERATIVE AT THE PARIS MEETING. EISENHOWER FELT THAT THERE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN A SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT MEETING IN MAY EVEN WITHOUT THE U-2 CASE.

THE FORMER PRESIDENT WAS ASKED DURING THE COURSE OF HIS CHAT WITH SMITH WHETHER, IF HE HAD IT TO DO OVER AGAIN, HE WOULD HANDLE THE SITUATION IN THE SAME WAY.

HE SAID THAT AS FAR AS THE MAY SUMMIT MEETING WAS CONCERNED AND IN RETROSPECT, HE SHOULD HAVE STOPPED THE U-2 FLIGHTS SOME WEEK BEFORE MEETING KHRUSHCHEV.

EISENHOWER SAID THE FLIGHTS HAD BEEN MOVING WITH SUCH SUCCESSFUL REGULARITY, HOWEVER, THAT HE HIMSELF UNDOUBTEDLY BECAME OVER-CONFIDENT AND NEGLECTED TO HAVE THEM HALTED.

EISENHOWER SAID TODAY, HOWEVER, REMAINS A STRONG ADVOCATE OF THE U-2 FLIGHTS IN GENERAL, REGARDING THIS TYPE OF INTELLIGENCE AS A DISTASTEFUL BUT VITAL ASPECT OF THE COLD WAR EFFORT. THE FORMER PRESIDENT HAS FREQUENTLY INQUIRED OF FRIENDS WHETHER CRITICS OF HIS U-2 PLANE POLICY WOULD LIKE TO GIVE BACK THE VALUABLE INFORMATION THESE AIRCRAFT ACQUIRED PRIOR TO MAY 1, 1960.

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